

DIVINE GENTLENESS ACKNOWLEDGED NO. 683

**A SERMON
DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, APRIL 1, 1866,
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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

*"Your gentleness has made me great."
Psalm 18:35.*

THERE are several interpretations of this text. A moment will suffice to give them to you. The word is capable of being translated, "Your *goodness* has made me great." David saw much of benevolence in God's action towards him, and he gratefully ascribed all his greatness not to his own goodness, but to the goodness of God. "Your *providence*" is another reading which is indeed nothing more than goodness in action. Goodness is providence in embryo; providence is goodness fully developed. Goodness is the bud of which providence is the flower; or goodness is the seed of which providence is the harvest. Some render it, "Your *help*," which is but another word for providence. Providence is the firm ally of the saints, aiding them in the service of their Lord. Some learned annotators tell us that the text means, "Your *humility* has made me great." "Your *condescension*" may, perhaps, serve as a comprehensive reading, combining the ideas which we have already mentioned, as well as that of humility. It is God's making Himself little, which is the cause of our being made great. We are so little that if God should manifest His greatness without condescension, we should be trampled under His feet; but God, who must stoop to view the skies and bow to see what angels do, bends His eyes yet lower and looks to the lowly and contrite, and makes them great. While these are the translations which have been given to the adopted text of the original, we find that there are other readings; for instance, the Septuagint, which reads, "Your *discipline*"—Your fatherly correction—"has made me great," while the Chaldee paraphrase reads, "Your word has increased me." Still the idea is the same. David ascribes all his own greatness to the condescending goodness and graciousness of his Father in heaven. I trust we all feel that this sentiment is echoed in our hearts, and we also confess that whatever of goodness or greatness God may have put upon us, we must cast our crowns at His feet, and cry, "Your gentleness has made me great."

We intend, this morning, to keep to the Authorized Version: "Your gentleness has made me great." And, in handling the text we shall have three points; first, the text *suggests historical illustrations* from the life of David; secondly, it *awakens personal gratitude*; and thirdly, it *declares gracious privilege*—we are made great.

I. The life of David is exceedingly full of illustrations of the truth of God which he here uttered—"Your gentleness has made me great." We will briefly review it up to the time of his becoming king. David, as the youngest of the family, contrary to the general rule, appears to have been despised by his parents so that when Samuel came to keep the feast, they sent for all their sons except David who was left in the fields keeping the sheep. I should suppose, judging from the conduct of his brothers to him in the valley of Elah, that they held him in very small esteem. Probably their habits were very different from his; they could not enter into the holier ways of the shepherd songster, nor could he enjoy their ruder and less seemly exercises. He was the despised one of the family, a reproach unto his mother's children; nevertheless the Lord had chosen him in preference to all the rest, for the gentleness of God delighted in David the shepherd boy. What a balm must that divine love have been to David's wounded spirit! How often, sitting alone with his flocks, must he have sung to his harp, "When my father and mother forsake me, then the Lord will take me up"! The gracious gentleness of his God to him must have encouraged his broken spirit when he felt the roughness of his father and the scorn of his brothers. His early life was peculiarly a season of hallowed rest and consecrated enjoyment of the gentleness of the Lord.

His first entrance upon public life was greatly marked by the sternness of those who should have discerned his worth and treated him with love. His father sent him to the army, not as a soldier, though never was there a more valiant man than this youngest son of Jesse, but he was employed as a mere burden-bearer. "Take now for your brothers an ephah of this parched corn, and these ten loaves, and run to the camp to your brothers; and carry these ten cheeses unto the captain of their thousand." He was a mere porter and messenger to his more honored brothers. When he began to inquire concerning the giant—"Who is this that defies the armies of the living God?" his brothers asked in a most snarling and contemptuous way, "With whom have you left those few sheep in the wilderness, because of the pride and naughtiness of your heart to see the battle?" Very different was the gentle communing of his heavenly Father. When in the inner chamber of his spirit his heart talked with God, he received no contemptuous epithets from the Most High. It is true he had all the outward marks of youth, and consequent unfitness for the fight; but the Lord sees not as man sees, for man looks at the outward appearance, but God looks at the heart, and that bold heart was chosen to meet the Philistine. David was a man after God's own heart, and God's gentle communing with him strengthened him and made him so great that he dared to say, "Your servant slew both the lion and the bear, and this uncircumcised Philistine shall be as one of them." The harshness of his brothers might have cowed him, but the gentleness of God encouraged him. He might have quailed before their irony and sarcasm, but the tender promise of God was the still water of which he drank and the green pasture in which he rested.

Now David comes to court, but he is no sooner among the courtiers than Saul hates him. "Saul has slain his thousands, but David his ten thousands" was a song most unmusical to Saul's jealous ears. "Saul eyed David," and in later days, when David played upon the harp, the evil spirit came upon Saul, and he hurled his javelin at the young harpist, hoping to pin him to the wall. But mark the gentleness of God—while Saul hated him the people loved him—for all Judah and all Israel loved David because he went in and out before them, and better still, the God who tried him with Saul comforted him with Jonathan. I like to think of those generous consolations which Jonathan rendered to the man whom his father so grievously maltreated. Those quiet evening walks, those tender interchanges of affection when the love of Jonathan, which surpassed the love of woman, made glad the tender heart of David, must have helped to make David greatly glad. He must have felt at times as if he would leave Saul's court, and fly from the service of his country; but then Jonathan was the tie to keep him in his proper place, the gentle silken bond which bound him to the horns of God's altar. It was God's gentleness in raising up Jonathan as his companion which kept David in the place where greatness was possible for him, and enabled him to still live in those courts of which he was soon himself to be the master. There was gentleness even about the character of his wife Michal. The father would destroy, but the daughter saves her husband's life.

When David at last fled from Saul he fled to Nob, to the priests. I think that was great gentleness on the part of God which permitted David to take the show bread and the consecrated sword. I never hear David rebuked for that bold deed; our Savior mentions it without a single word of censure; according to the strict letter of the law it appears to be perfectly unjustifiable—but the gentleness of God saw the need of His servant, and inclined the heart of all the priests towards David, so that they gave him bread, and gave him what was equally necessary under his difficulty—the sword of Goliath. When David fled into the wilderness, we cannot read the story of him among the caves of Adullam and the goat tracks of Engedi with any feelings of pity, for his joys ran high in his banishment. I can understand him sighing for the house of God, and declaring that he "dwelt in a dry and thirsty land where no water was," but, on the other hand, one might almost envy David there in his solitary fastnesses, for his God was his companion, and the blessings of the Most High were showered upon him. There was gentleness towards him even in those wild places, so that the gypsy life of David was rendered very happy; and the wanderer banished from his native land was not banished from his God, but felt the presence of the Most High in the midst of his solitude. "Your gentleness has made me great."

There are two points in David's history where I think the gentleness of God eminently worked with him. One particularly is connected with Nabal. That churl sent a very insulting message to David—"There are many servants, nowadays, who break away from their masters." I must not say that David

was a Welshman, but he possessed much of the hot blood of our brothers, and was warm in temperament. David had a hot heart within him, quick for love and quick for anger too, and in an instant his soul was on fire with resentment—"God do so to me, and more also," he said, "if I leave anything of him before the morning light." Away he goes with his band to slay Nabal. Now, what is to prevent him? Nabal cannot resist him; but here comes a wise and amiable woman—no one more susceptible to kindly female influence than David—here comes the wise Abigail with her laden asses, bearing presents. How wisely she puts it; how her lovely face, and streaming eyes, and bended knees, all aid her while she adds—"This shall be no grief unto you, nor offense of heart unto my lord, either that you have shed blood causeless, or that my lord has avenged himself." It was a blessed interposition of divine grace which sent Abigail just then! David would certainly have taken terrible vengeance, and have stained his character with vindictive blood-shedding if it had not been for the gentleness of God which found so good a wife in so bad a house, and prompted her to interpose. Take another case. It must have been gentle influence from on high which kept David back, when as he walked at night over the field where Saul and his host all slept, he penetrated within the trenches and through the armed men, and came to the place where the king lay with his men at arms all round him, every man asleep. There was the water at the king's head, and his spear stuck in the ground; and Abishai, one of those fierce-minded sons of Zeruiah who are always ready for a blow, said to David, "Let me smite him; I will smite him but this once," but David holds up his hand, and declares that he will not be guilty of the blood of the Lord's Anointed. There must have been a marvelously gentle influence over David just then to have kept back his hand! I will not say that nine out of ten warriors would have done it, and have been justified in so doing, according to martial law, but I will say that there is scarcely a case to be found in history where a man would have spared his cruel, inveterate, and malicious foe—engaged in open and relentless warfare with him—when such an opportunity had been put into his hands. David had never been so great if divine gentleness had not restrained the blow!

Running on in the history of David we find that he was not always wise. How like a fool he looked when he scrabbled on the wall and spat upon his beard, and played the madman before the king of the Philistines! Ah, David, what a miserable spectacle! Though fit to be a companion of angels, he acted as if he had been only fit to herd with lunatics; but God delivered him, and after he had been delivered, you remember he wrote that beautiful Psalm in which he says, "Come, you children, hearken unto me: I will teach you the fear of the Lord," and so on—a most beautiful expression of gratitude to God, and an earnest desire to teach others in God's way. Even when His people play the fool, God does not cast them away. When we are such that God Himself might be ashamed of us and say, "Take him away! Have I need of a madman to play the fool before Me?" yet even then our God, who knows that we are but dust, has pity upon us and delivers us out of the mischief into which our folly has thrust us. Possibly in David's life there is not one moment in which his anguish was more acute than when he returned to Ziklag. He had been marching with Achish to invade his own native land. He was in a very awkward position, he could not fight against his own countrymen, and yet having taken refuge with the Philistines he was bound to go with them to war; in that dilemma the Lord interposed for him; the Philistines' chieftains became jealous and distrustful of him, and through their influence the king of the Philistines dismissed him. However, when he went back to Ziklag, the place where he and his men had dwelt, he found it burned to the ground, the wives of his comrades and all their goods had been carried away; not a vestige left of their happy home, children and family all gone; it is said that the men of war "lifted up their voice and wept." It takes a great deal to make a soldier sit down and weep; but in their anguish they went further and spoke of stoning David. What did David do? He "encouraged himself in the Lord his God." He turned himself to the kindness and gentleness of the Most High, and took comfort in his God. Surely the gentleness of God must then have shone out in contrast with the bitterness and ferocity of the men with whom he was associated. What could David do? It was not his fault that Ziklag had been burned. How could he prevent the robbers from plundering? He turned to his God when he was thus falsely accused, and comfort flowed in like a mighty stream; and not many hours afterwards he overtook the spoilers and came back joyfully victorious.

I think I have proven my point and need not delay you longer that wherever any roughness from man had to be borne by David, there was always some gentleness on the part of God shown at the same time to sustain his spirit. When it seemed as if he must be quite crushed and overcome, and all hands were against him and none to help him, then it was that a consolation gently given by the right hand of the Most High made David to play the man again, so that he triumphed over all his adversaries. Thus much for historical illustration!

II. Now, we will turn to your own history, for the text EXCITES PERSONAL GRATITUDE.

Have you that little book with you? I suppose you do not all keep one, but still your memory will serve you as a diary—do not print it, we have too many autobiographies already; but if you do not print it for other people, keep it for yourselves. May I ask you to turn to an early page in it? Do you remember *when your heart was broken with a sense of sin?* A truly broken heart is anguish, indeed; when your righteousness becomes filthy rags, and your hope changes into despair; the anger of God pursues you; is before you, you could see no way of escape? I shall not go over the dark details, but you remember well when you were in that condition. Do you also recollect the gentleness of the Savior? That was a very tender promise which first came to you like oil poured into your wounds. That was a very tender hand, a very cheering influence of the Holy Spirit which lulled the tempest into calm, and hushed the thunder into the whisper of love. Do you remember the place, the spot of ground where Jesus first met with you? Some of us can never forget the rapture all divine when He showed us His hands and His feet, and said to us, “I have suffered all this for you; weep no more, your sins were laid on Me.” There was peculiar gentleness about that first action of God the Holy Spirit. He has never, perhaps, seemed quite so gentle with us since, for we have never been as weak as we were then. We were shorn lambs, and He tempered the wind to us. Our wounds were very raw and bleeding, and He touched us very softly, knowing that he who would heal a sick soul must have downy fingers with which to touch it. Gentleness indeed was on His part which said to us, “Live!” when He saw us wallowing in our blood. Since then, dear friends, what tokens of gentleness you and I have had! How many times He has *checked our imprudence!* When we first began our spiritual life, we meant to drive the Church before us, and to drag the world behind us—our own idea was that there never would be such an earnest Christian as we would be. We looked with pity upon the coldness of many professors, and we resolved in our own souls that we would far outdo them all. And what excitements we got into, and what things we said, and what strange things we did! There was much to be envied about our first spiritual life, but there was much to be pitied in it too. Oh, what fools we were, and we thought ourselves so wise. What blockheads we made of ourselves every now and then and all the while wondered that everybody else did not do the same. But by what gentle means the Lord curbed us! He did not do as some of our friends did, who put enough wet blankets on us to extinguish our zeal; He let the zeal burn, but He gently checked the imprudence of it. We did not know how weak we were; He let us fall and cut our knees, and learn by experience our utter inability to go it alone. When a schoolmaster has a very dull boy, he would gladly teach him some useful knowledge, but after 20 times teaching he does not know it; and the master says, “What shall I do with this child? How shall I ever make anything but a dunce of him?” Yet he tries again; and so our God might well have said of us. Yet, how seldom has He used the rod after all; He has been obliged to take to it sometimes, but oh, how seldom comparatively; He has dealt so gently with us, teaching us with much pain and care. When a man has taken to gardening who does not understand it, if he takes his knife in the pruning season, at what a rate he goes to work! His cutting here and there will do 10 times more harm than good, but the gardener who is well skilled is gentle with the knife; and truly, dear friends, our great Husbandman has been very gentle with the knife with all His trees. Some of you have lost a husband or a child, and you have come from wealth to poverty. Yes, He has used the knife, or else He would not be not wise; but He has still spared you some comforts, or else He would not be not kind. At any rate He has spared you Himself, and He is more than all to your languishing spirit. Thus in the way in which He has dealt with your imprudence, and sins, the Lord has had a world of gentleness with you.

In looking over our diary, we may say that God has dealt very gently with us in *accepting our first endeavors.* When you began to preach, my dear friend, the first time, if the Lord had really let you know what a mess you made of it, you would never have tried again; and the first time you were asked to pray

in public, if you could have heard the opinion of some of those who heard you, you would not have felt very happy; but very happily for you, you never did hear those opinions, and you have been able to keep on till now you pray with much acceptance and profit to your Christian brothers and sisters. Our beginnings are very much like our children's beginning. Many a young apprentice spoils a great deal more than he earns, and yet his master knows that he cannot learn without spoiling something, and so he bears with him. And our God has let us spoil a great deal of work that we may one day be skilled workers. Through Jesus He accepts our prayers and our efforts; and though we are very blundering servants, He has not discharged us, but He still keeps us in His service, and blesses us in it, and in His mercy He gives us to see the work of His hands prospering.

That same divine gentleness also displays itself in caring for us in our sorrowful circumstances, and particularly in our inward fears. There are distresses to which God's people are subject with which their fellow Christians can have but little sympathy. There are some Christians whom I have tried at times to comfort, but their fears have been so silly that I have felt more inclined to laugh at them than to console them. There are many of God's saints who are the victims of foolish fears, but the fears are none the less painful and vexatious because of their folly. Now our God is so tender and gentle that He even condescends to deal with our silly fears. Take such a one as this—"I will never leave you, I will never forsake you." Now it really is foolish of us to think that God will leave us or forsake us, and yet He condescends to meet that foolish and even wicked unbelief of ours, and gives a promise to meet it! To suppose that He can forget is the height of absurdity, and yet He is pleased to meet that absurd fear of ours by saying, "Can a woman forget her sucking child?" Even the absurdity of our sorrow does not move the anger of God, but in His great gentleness He enters into the childish troubles of His children lets them tell out their troubles and sorrows, and "as a father pities," not a man of his own size, but "his *children*, so the Lord pities them who fear Him." You have seen a father bring himself down to his child. Two or three children have been at play; some of them have been cross and unkind to the little one, a child of three or four years of age, and father talks as if he were a child of three years of age himself; and though the trouble when it is stated is so very little, such a very insignificant trouble that a man would be ashamed to mention it, yet father enters into it altogether. That is what the Psalmist means—"Like as a father pities his children, so the Lord pities them who fear Him." His gentleness shows itself in His being afflicted in our afflictions and entering into our sorrows, and putting Himself side by side with us in the battle of spiritual life. I trust I may not weary you while I remind you of all this. I shall not if all the while you continue blessing and praising God for what you have tasted and handled of these good things.

How much patience and gentleness God has had with us *in suiting His truths to our understandings and experiences!* "I have many things to say unto you," says Jesus, "but you cannot bear them now." It is so with us—I suppose we did not learn the doctrine of election during the first week of our spiritual life. Higher and more sublime truths of God are left for later experience, and belong rather to advanced saints than to the babes in grace. If the babe in Christ knew so much about the filthiness of his own heart as the advanced man of God, he might not be able to bear up under the grief occasioned by such knowledge. Inward discoveries come by degrees, and as we see the light of the cross we see the darkness of sin; as we are assured of our salvation in Christ, we discover our utter and entire ruin by the Fall of Adam. It is His gentleness which makes the all-wise One stoop down to our ignorance and teach us by slow degrees.

What gentleness our God has shown to us in the timing and the tuning of our trials! We are such poor weaklings at times, that if we were tempted much we would not be able to bear it. The timing of heavy trial is of very great importance. If I had lost my friend a year ago what would I have done? But just now it is a great sorrow, yet it has its alleviation. Had I been tempted as I now am but last week, I would have yielded; but now I have received strength from on high, and I can pass with safety through the fire. Have you not often felt that either when you have had an opportunity to sin you have not felt the temptation, or else when you have been tempted you have not found the opportunity? When you have been weak you have not experienced the trial, or when you have borne the trial you have not been weak.

I will not say more, except I beg your hearts to praise God. I pray you wake up your souls to bless Him. How much we lose by not blessing God more! Oh that I could praise Him! If I might choose my vocation on earth, I think I would choose above all things to write hymns and psalms, such as the Lord's people might sing when they praise Him; and my highest wish would be to be one of heaven's poets, to write psalms for the spirits before the throne, and compose celestial sonnets for the blood-bought ones who praise Him day and night. Oh to praise the Lord! Oh to bless Him, and to magnify Him—to spend and to be spent in the praise and glory of my God! Wake up, you slumbering ones! Arouse yourselves, you who are dull and dead of heart! Wake up, my glory; wake up psaltery and harp! I myself will awake right early while I remember that His loving-kindness has made me great.

III. Our third duty is to DECLARE OUR GRACIOUS PRIVILEGE. "Great," says one, "why, the text applies to David, it does not apply to us." Ah, but we have a body of great people here this morning. I do not suppose you will see their names in the *Times* tomorrow, but for all that we are honored with great company this morning. I will be bold enough to say that I question whether the House of Commons, and the House of Lords, and Windsor Castle thrown in together, hold more great folks than this Tabernacle does this morning. Great people! Yes, *really great* people! The true aristocracy! Let us describe them. There is a greatness of birth which God gives to His children. "It is no mean thing," said David, "to be a king's son-in-law," but to be a king's son, to have the blue blood in your veins; you do not think much of it because you have not got it, but you suppose those who have it think it the most wonderful of all privileges? To be descended from that thievish crew who came over to England at the Norman Conquest is thought to be a high honor; but how much more is it to be descended from the King of kings! The blood imperial of heaven is in the veins of every regenerated man and woman. No matter though your garb is coarse, and your home is the abode of poverty, you are a prince of the blood royal the moment that you are born-again and made a child of God, and adopted into the family of the Most High. These are the princes of the living God; these are they who shall be crowned with immortal honor in the day of the Lord's appearing. Though here they may live unknown and despised, yet angelic eyes detect them, and the whole world shall see them. "When He shall appear they shall appear with Him in glory."

Men court much the greatness which comes by *election*. There are presidents of republics who become great by the national vote; it is no mean greatness to be dignified with imperial rank, not by the accident of birth, but by the well-earned respect of honest men. This is something that men may covet. Well, we have this very greatness put upon us by the election of God. Everyone who believes in Christ Jesus was chosen in Him from before the foundation of the world. What are the votes of men, what the applause of the many after all? The choice of God is to be desired most, because He has set His love upon me my soul shall sing and rejoice. Election makes all the objects of it great. Now, as you think of your birth and your election in Christ Jesus, you can say, "Your gentleness has made me great."

There is a kind of greatness in the world to which most people pay quite enough respect, namely, the greatness of *wealth*. A man is very much thought of in proportion to the contents of his iron safe. After all, people do not respect men so much nowadays as they do iron safes. The iron safe is the god of thousands. However, saints can stand on an equality with any men—City men, or whatever they may be. Every believer in Jesus Christ can sing—

*"This world is mine and worlds to come,
Earth is my lodge and heaven my home;
All things are ours, the gifts of God,
The purchase of a Savior's blood."*

Poor rich men have to take care of these things for us, but they belong to us. The sons of the alien are our plowmen and our vinedressers; they are serfs of God's providence, slaves in the kingdom in which we are sons. He who on bended knee can lift his streaming eye to heaven and say, "My Father!" is rich to all the intents of bliss, rich enough for earth; and when all the treasures of earth shall be melted, when the rust shall have corrupted, and the thief shall have broken through, and the moth shall have eaten up all the world's treasures—then shall the wealth of the truly great shine forth forever more.

Some men are great on account of their *victories*. How they crowd the streets when a Caesar or a Napoleon returns in triumph from the slaughter of his fellow creatures! Lo, I triumphed! Sound the

trumpets! Beat the drums! Hang out the garlands! Gather, you crowds! Here comes the red-handed man, crimson with the blood of his fellows! What glory is this? Bah! It smells of the butcher's shambles. The glory of a child of God is the glory which Christ has given him of having slain his sins, of having trampled under foot his corruptions, the glory of having fought with devils and overcome them, having wrestled with principalities and powers, and laid them in the dust. This is true glory! And what glory shall that be which awaits every true believer when up the everlasting hills he shall ascend to be welcomed where his Master sits, welcomed with the same words of congratulation, "Well done!"

There are great men, too, about the world, who are great in *influence*. The entire world is governed by the backstairs. There are persons who sit behind the throne and pull the strings. People always touch their hats to men of influence. They may want a situation in the Customs for their first son; they may require an introduction into the Admiralty for the third boy. But what shall I say of every believer? Beloved, his influence is unbounded! I wish you would use your influence for me. When you are speaking with the King of kings, since He has promised you that whatever you shall ask He will give it to you, speak for me! I think I have some claim on some of you. When it is well with you, think of me. When you are in the King's courts, you who are the King's and have an audience with Him, who sit at His table and lean your heads upon His bosom, pray for His poor servant who has many cares, and many labors, and longs to see the King's face always. Beloved, the influence which the saints have with the King of kings is marvelous. They can touch the sinews of the omnipotent arm, and it will do for them whatever their hearts desire. If you did but know it, the poorest saint, though bedridden, is more to be honored for the influence which she may have with the King of kings, than the greatest peers of the realm for the influence which they may have in the courts of royalty.

But I must not tarry, else I was about to say that we have a greatness of history. There are some men who have a peculiar greatness on account of their history. Everyone wants to see them. If they go into a crowd everyone whispers, "That is he." What do you say of a child of God? There is more to be seen in him than in any other person. Shall I tell you his history? What would you think of a man who has been dead and buried, and is alive again, and is the same man and yet not the same? Himself but yet a new man in Christ Jesus? A man who has been born twice? Such is every believer. He has been begotten again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. He is dead with Christ and is risen with Him; and even now he does not live upon earth, but is made to sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. Why, he is the greatest curiosity in the world. A Christian is a wonder to angels, a wonder to devils, a wonder to himself; and if men were wise he would be a wonder to them!

Great men, again, there are because of their *great discoveries*. We admire the men who penetrated into the center of Africa and found out the source of the ancient river. Believers also have made discoveries in the vast desert of their own nature, and have found out the source of the eternal love of God. They can sing with Kent—

*"A monument of grace,
A sinner saved by blood;
The streams of love I trace,
Up to their fountain, God;
And in His mighty breast I see,
Eternal thoughts of love to me."*

It is better than finding out the source of 50 Niles, to find my name inscribed upon the heart of God, and to find myself chosen and dear to God. Truly then, though we are little and despised, we can say without any exaggeration, "Your gentleness has made me great."

Two things and I have done. The first is to Christian people. As you go your way, you who have believed, do not go out of this place with your heads hanging down, and do not behave like dispirited people. You are great! I want you to live like great folks. Live up to your spiritual incomes, you will spend a great deal if you do. Live happily, live joyfully, live holily, live triumphantly; live as those who are to live in heaven. Do not live like the pauper sons of earth, who with their gold and their silver are yet naked, and poor, and miserable; but live like the sons of God who are clothed in the scarlet and fine linen of the righteousness of Christ, and fare sumptuously every day. The next time you are met by some would-be great man who wants to domineer over your faith, look him respectfully but firmly in the face,

and tell him that consciences and hearts were made for God alone. The next time the world attempts to win you by its bribes, tell the world it does not know what you are worth, or else it would not attempt to bribe you. Every man has his price, but your price is too great for the world to give. Tell the world that you can look it in the face, and are not afraid to dare it to do its worst or its best, for you are one of the blood royal of heaven.

I hate, above all things, Christians getting into the way of being honest with themselves. Mind you, the Puritans were not proud, they were humble men, but at the same time they knew that a man of God has something in him, and they would not lay their necks beneath the feet of tyrants. When kings began to devour the saints, they quoted the old psalm about “binding kings in chains, and nobles in fetters of iron,” and soon the Ironsides were to the front in the day of war for the Lord, and for the faith, and for the covenant. We need no carnal weapons now. We have learned better than they. We care little about politics. Let the potsherds of the earth strive with themselves about that; but when it comes to truth and righteousness, for God and for His cause, shall we put our finger on our lips and speak with bated breath? Never, as the Lord our God is our helper! Brothers and sisters get a little touch of the old Lutheran spirit; it is needed nowadays. This England of ours is going to the Pope as fast as it can, and all sorts of heresies are springing up, and the most of men are soft animals, without the appearance of a backbone in them. I pray that you Christian people may get a thoroughly sound backbone of high spiritual principle, and may feel that you cannot give up the smallest atom of the truth of God, but must stand fast for it and by it, come what may. These are the men the edge of whose sword the fiend has felt of old, and he still trembles at the thought of them.

This advice of mine would be very dangerous if I did not couple it with the whole of the text. Remember where all true moral greatness must come from—it must come from God alone, and from His gentleness. Who are you to use these big words? Nothing, a swollen mass of emptiness, except as God’s love dwells with you, but oh, brothers and sisters, the tenderness of God, while it makes us lie in the very dust before Him, yet lifts us up in the presence of our fellows. The love and gentleness of God makes us feel that we are less than nothing, less than the least of all His mercies; but oh, it makes us feel that we cannot sin, that we cannot yield to our fellow men in matters of conscience, that we must stand up for Him who has done so much for us. May you realize in your lives and in your hearts the meaning of my text, “Your gentleness has made me great!”

Portion of Scripture read before the sermon—Psalm 18.

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